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UNCLAS KINSHASA 000228

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS UPDATE: LAST REGISTRATION CENTERS

CLOSED

**¶11. (U)** The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) announced February 9 that the last remaining voter registration centers, located in Bandundu and Equateur provinces, will close February 10, bringing an end to enrollment efforts nationwide. Though the official enrollment period ended December 15, 113 centers in Bandundu and 184 in Equateur remained operational due to logistical delays in opening some enrollment centers prior to the December 18-19 constitutional referendum. The CEI announced the closing of the last centers after having registered 98 percent of the estimated eligible voters in those provinces. According to CEI figures as of February 8, 2,886,298 Congolese have registered in Bandundu and 2,926,991 have registered in Equateur. Total voter registration in the DRC now stands at 25,603,079.

**¶12. (U)** The CEI also announced initial procedures and dates for the registration of candidates. Presidential candidates will have 10 days to register beginning the day after the promulgation of the electoral law. (Note: The electoral law is still awaiting adoption by the Parliament. A vote on the law is expected February 13, pending the promulgation of the DRC's new constitution. End note.) Presidential candidates will only be allowed to register at CEI offices in Kinshasa. Those planning to run as national deputies will be allowed to register in the same time period, but must do so at CEI offices in the capitals of the DRC's 11 provinces. Candidates for provincial legislatures will have one month to register, beginning March 15, at CEI liaison offices throughout the country. (Note: The CEI announced in January that any candidates who failed to register to vote will be allowed to do so at the same time they register their candidacies with the Commission. End note.)

**¶13. (SBU)** Comment: The closing of registration centers may put an end to speculation about restarting the enrollment process to accommodate the demands of the opposition UDPS party, which had made the reopening of the centers a condition for their participation in elections. In addition, the registration figures for Bandundu and Equateur will hopefully allay fears of the PPRD and MLC that those two provinces (which are important areas for their respective political prospects) would be underrepresented in the allocation of seats in the National Assembly. It is a safe bet, however, that various candidates and parties will continue to press for any advantage they can get in the process of finalizing registration lists and allocating numbers of parliamentary seats among the DRC's new voting districts. End comment.

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